

Washington State Patrol Media Release

Chief John R. Batiste



Captain Jeff DeVere
Government and Media Relations
(360) 753-5299 – office
(360) 753-5469 – fax
<http://www.wsp.wa.gov>

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Contact: Daniel Coon, WSP, (360) 753-0684

WSP Busts the *77 Myth

(Olympia) - Many urban myths are regularly "busted" on the popular television show MythBusters. Washington State Patrol is also trying to bust an urban myth that dialing *77 on a cell phone will connect you to a State Patrol dispatcher.

According to the WSP dialing *77 in Washington State will not reach a State Patrol dispatcher or any other law enforcement agency.

"Just call 9-1-1," said Washington State Patrol Chief John R. Batiste. "There's no reason to use another number. 9-1-1 is always the best way to reach the police when you need our assistance."

The *77 myth is about a female driver who was on her way to visit a friend when an unmarked vehicle pulled up behind her with emergency lights on. The driver did what she was taught by her parents to never pull over for an unmarked vehicle and to dial *77 to reach a highway patrol dispatcher. The female driver spoke to a dispatcher who determined that the unmarked vehicle was not a police vehicle. Real police officers soon surrounded the unmarked vehicle and a convicted rapist was supposedly driving the vehicle.

Washington State Patrol wants all citizens, should they receive the *77 myth by e-mail or hear it from friends or family, to know this myth is busted.

The WSP advises if you are unsure that a vehicle attempting to stop you is a police vehicle, you should drive at the posted speed limit or under with your hazard lights on to a well lit public area. This will allow you to better identify the person who stopped you and their vehicle. Call 9-1-1 and ask them to verify that a police officer is stopping you or to send a uniformed officer to verify that a real police officer has stopped you.

Most police vehicles are fully marked and come equipped with emergency lights, siren and door markings naming the police agency.

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If an unmarked police vehicle stops you, look for these indicators:

1. Blue lights - These are only legal for law enforcement. If the vehicle stopping you does not have blue lights, do not stop, call 9-1-1. If you are unable to call 9-1-1 right away, write down the vehicle plate number and later report it to any law enforcement agency.
2. Uniform - Law enforcement officers will almost always be wearing a uniform complete with a badge and gun/weapons displayed on a utility belt. Read the patch on the officer's uniform to identify the agency the officer works for and make sure it is a law enforcement agency. If the person stopping you does not have a badge or weapons on a utility belt, drive away at normal speed and call 9-1-1. If you are unable to call 9-1-1 right away, write down the plate number of the vehicle and later report it to any law enforcement agency.

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